

## Message Text

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 01 ROME 09767 081542Z

73

ACTION CU-04

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 L-03 PA-02 CIAE-00 INR-07

NSAE-00 SS-15 SP-02 SMI-01 /047 W

----- 090711

R 081331Z JUL 75

FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1965

INFO USIA WASHDC

UNCLAS ROME 9767

FOR CU/ARTS - P. SOLMSEN

USIA FOR ICS AND IWE

E.O.11652: N/A

TAGS: SCUL

SUBJECT: SPRING'75 VENICE BIENNALE MEETING OF FOREIGN PAVILION  
COMMISSIONERS

1. AS DISCUSSED DURING RECENT SOLMSEN VISIT ROME, QUESTION OF US PARTICIPATION IN VENICE BIENNALE (VB) COMING INTO SHARP FOCUS, AND THE VARIOUS ELEMENTS INVOLVED -- EMBASSY, DEPARTMENT, MOMA, SMITHSONIAN -- NEED TO CONSIDER THE MAIN FACTORS TO PROVIDE SOLID, UNIFIED BASE FOR DECISION. THIS MESSAGE REPORTS ON VENICE MEETING OF FOREIGN PAVILION COMMISSIONERS, HELD MAY 3-JUNE 1, 1975 (MILAN BPAO FOTOS AND USIS SENIOR STAFF ADVISOR MERCATALI REPRESENTED US), AND SETS FORTH SOME OPTIONS.

2. SESSIONS ATTENDED BY 36 PERSONS REPRESENTING 24 COUNTRIES, PLUS 26 ITALIANS REPRESENTING VENICE BIENNALE AUTHORITIES, TECHNICAL ADVISORS, AND OFFICIALS FROM CITY, REGION AND CENTRAL GOVERNMENT.

3. UNDERLYING PROBLEM HAS BEEN DISTORTION OF BIENNALE INTO INSTRUMENT OF CULTURAL WARFARE DIRECTED BY MARXIST LEFT AGAINST US, SECTORS OF ITALIAN GOVERNMENT AND A VARIETY OF OTHERS DENOMINATED AS "FASCIST." THIS DISTORTED BIENNALE  
UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 ROME 09767 081542Z

DURING 1974, AND PLAN TO PLACE ENTIRE OPERATION IN HANDS OF

LEFT-WING MILITANTS HAS SPLIT VENICE AND BECOME A BITTER  
INTERNAL POLITICAL ISSUE. IT HAS ALSO ALIENATED FOREIGN  
GOVERNMENTS.

4. AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND, MEETING WAS CHARACTERIZED BY DESIRE  
ON PART VB OFFICIALS TO APPEAR MORE FLEXIBLE AND  
COOPERATIVE, AVOIDING HEATED POLEMICS OF OCT 74 SESSION OF VB  
COMMISSIONERS. VB PRESIDENT RIPA DI MEANA (LEFT-WING SOCIALIST)  
CHAired ALL SESSIONS AND MADE CONCERTED EFFORT TO  
DUCK FRESH DISCUSSION OF GOI 1973 LEGISLATION THAT HAD ALTERED  
BASIC CONCEPT FOR NEW BIENNALE. AT ISSUE WAS ITALIAN BIENNALE  
AUTHORITY TO DETERMINE WHICH FOREIGN ARTISTS WOULD  
BE INVITED TO BIENNALE AND WHICH WORKS EXHIBITED.

5. DURING MOST OF INITIAL DAY, AGENDA DEVOTED TO DISCUSSING  
VARIOUS 1975-76 INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS THAT VB AUTHORITIES  
PREPARED AND SUBMITTED TO PAVILION COMMISSIONERS FOR REVIEW AND  
APPROVAL SOME SIX WEEKS EARLIER. ALMOST WITHOUT EXCEPTION,  
FOREIGN COMMISSIONERS OBJECTED TO EACH PROJECT PROPOSED, INDI-  
CATING OWN SEPARATE SET OF PRIORITIES, AS WELL AS OTHER  
FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS REGARDING FURTHER PARTICIPATION IN VENICE  
BIENNALES.

6. WIDE DIVERGENCE OF VIEWS BETWEEN VB AUTHORITIES AND  
MOST FOREIGN COMMISSIONERS READILY APPARENT BY CONCLUSION  
OF FIRST DAY. UNWILLINGNESS VOICED PARTICULARLY BY BRITISH,  
GERMANS AND NORDIC NATIONS TO RETURN TO VENICE FOR FUTURE  
SESSIONS THAT MIGHT RESULT IN NO CONCRETE OR POSITIVE CONCLUSIONS.  
BUT OPENING OF SECOND DAY'S SESSION MARKED BY  
SUDDEN APPEARANCE OF SWEETNESS AND LIGHT. VB CHAIRMAN  
CONCEDED ALMOST ACROSS THE BOARD, WITH ONLY THE BAEST CONCERN  
FOR FACE-SAVING.

7. FOLLOWING BASIC CONCLUSIONS CALMED THE CRISIS AND MAY HAVE  
SAVED THE VB FOR 1976:

A. VB CENTRAL COMMITTEE DECLARED IT WOULD HENCEFORTH  
AUTHORIZE EACH FOREIGN PAVILION TO PROCEED AUTONOMOUSLY TO  
SELECT OWN RESPECTIVE ARTISTS AND WORKS. EACH COUNTRY WILL  
BE RESPONSIBLE FOR COVERING ITS OWN PAVILION EXPENDITURES.  
UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 ROME 09767 081542Z

UNTIL ITAL PARLIAMENT CAN ACT TO AMEND 1973 LEGISLATION, VB  
CENTRAL COMMITTEE INDICATED ITS READINESS TO RUBBER-STAMP ALL  
DECISIONS TAKEN BY FOREIGN PAVILIONS, SO AS TO AVOID VIOLATING  
LETTER OF THE LAW.

B. COMMON THEME FOR 1976 VB WILL BE "THE ENVIRONMENT," AN  
ADMITTED UMBRELLA.

C. NEXT VB, TO LAST SOME 3-4 MONTHS, WILL FORMALLY OPEN IN JUNE 1976; PRESIDENT MEANA WILL ESTABLISH THE PRECISE DATE.

8. AGREEMENT REACHED THAT SMALL WORKING GROUPS FROM VB CENTRAL COMMITTEE SHOULD VISIT CAPITAL OF EACH COUNTRY HOLDING A PARTICIPATING PAVILION, BEGINNING IN EARLY AUTUMN. GROUPS WILL COORDINATE BIENNALE THROUGH SUCCESSION OF BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS, WITH OPPORTUNITY TO EXAMINE PROJECT OUTLINES, WORKING DIAGRAMS, AND GENERAL STATUS OF PROJECTS ON THE SPOT. FULL-SCALE MEETING FOR ALL FOREIGN PAVILION COMMISSIONERS PLANNED IN ENICE FOR JAN OR FEB 76.

9. CONFERENCE CHAIRMAN THEN DECLARED SUNDAY SESSION UNNECESSARY AND FINAL MEETING ADJOURNED SAT AT 1900.

10. GUGGENHAIM MUSEUM DIRECTOR THOMAS MESSER, FORTUITOUSLY PASSING THROUGH VENICE, ATTENDED MAY 31 AFTERNOON SESSION. DURING INFORMAL DISCUSSION WITH FOTOS, MESSER MENTIONED THAT SEVERAL AMERICAN MUSEUMS, INCLUDING GUGGENHEIM AND MOMA, WERE CONSIDERING FEASIBILITY APPLYING TO NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS (NEA) FOR SPECIAL COLLECTIVE GRANT TO PERMIT US PARTICIPATION IN NEXT BIENNALE.

11. MISSION REPRESENTATION AT MEETINGS OF JUNE AND OCT 74, OR AT THIS MOST RECENT CONFERENCE OF FOREIGN PAVILION COMMISSIONERS, CLEARLY DOES NOT IMPLY ANY OBLIGATION FOR US PARTICIPATION IN 1976 VB. BEFORE DECISION IS MADE, SEVERAL, SEVERAL COMPLEX FACTORS MUST BE CONSIDERED.

12. ON NEGATIVE SIDE, PARTICIPATION IN 1976 VB WOULD INVOLVE CONSIDERABLE EXPENDITURE AND EFFORT -- AND SOME RISK:""  
PRESENT VB MANAGEMENT HIGHLY POLITICIZED, AND (IN SPITE OF APPARENT TURNAROUND AT LAST MEETING) THERE IS AMPLE EVIDENCE  
UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 04 ROME 09767 081542Z

OF THEIR ANTI-AMERICAN SENTIMENT TO SUPPORT ARGUMENT FOR US STAYING AWAY. POTENTIAL BENEFIT TO US OF PARTICIPATION HARD TO MEASURE, UT GIVEN CURRENT NATURE OF VB, EFFECT NOT LIKELY TO BE GREAT. BELIEVE IT WORTH STRESSING THAT, IN CASE OF FULL US PARTICIPATION, EVEN WITH SUCCESSFUL GRANT FROM NA, WORKLOAD OF COORDINATION AND COMMUNICATIONS ON THIS PROJECT AT WASHINGTON END AND IN FIELD WOULD LIKELY BE EXTREMELY HEAVY. PRESENT STAFF RESOURCES IN FIELD INADEQUATE FOR ANY BUT BASIC MODEST ASSISTANCE TO SUCH AN EFFORT, AND ADDITIONAL STAFF WOULD HAVE TO BE PROVIDED, PIA TDY OR CONTRACT.

13. ON OTHER HAND, CONTINUOUS HISTORY OF US PARTICIPATION OVR YEARS MEANS THAT WITHDRAWAL AT THIS TIME WOULD BE READ BY SOME AS SIGNAL OF US MOOD OR POLICY, WITH POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS. HISTORY AND PAST PRESTIGE OF VB -- INCLUDING US SUCCESSES --

MUST BE CONSIDERED. AND IT MAY BE THAT THE INCREASE IN LEFTIST MILITANCY OF VB MANAGEMENT MAY INDEED PROVIDE A MORE USEFUL PLATFORM AND AUDIENCE THAN IN THE PAST, FOR SUCH MESSAGES ON US ARTS SCENE THAT ARE COMMUNICABLE THROUGH THIS MEDIUM. WE NEED TO CONSIDER US LONG-RANGE CULTURAL PRIORITIES LOOKING BEYOND 1976. (FYI SIMILAR POSITION BEING ADOPTED BY BRITISH, WHOSE COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE FROM LONDON INDICATED PRIVATELY DURING MAY MEETING THAT HE PLANNED RECOMMEND PROCEEDING IMMEDIATELY WITH ARRANGEMENTS FOR PARTICIPATION, WHILE REVIEWING UK INVOLVEMENT AFTER 1976 AGAINST LONG-RANGE PRIORITIES AND RESOURCE LIMITATIONS.)

14. EMBASSY ACCORDINGLY REQUESTS SOME READING OR GUIDANCE FROM DEPARTMENT AND OTHER US ELEMENTS REGARDING POLICY IMPLICATIONS, PRIORITY OF THE VENICE BIENNALE, AND AVAILABLE RESOURCES. WE WILL NEED TO GIVE A DEFINITIVE REPLY TO THE VB MANAGEMENT WITHIN A FEW WEEKS.VOLPE

UNCLASSIFIED

NNN

## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** MEETING AGENDA, COMMITTEE MEETINGS, INTERNATIONAL FESTIVALS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 08 JUL 1975  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** n/a  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** n/a  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:**  
**Disposition Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1975ROME09767  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** N/A  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Film Number:** D750235-0727  
**From:** ROME  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
**ISecure:** 1  
**Legacy Key:** link1975/newtext/t19750777/aaaacqlw.tel  
**Line Count:** 186  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Office:** ACTION CU  
**Original Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 4  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** n/a  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** ShawDG  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 02 DEC 2002  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <02 DEC 2002 by ThomasVJ>; APPROVED <17 MAR 2004 by ShawDG>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
06 JUL 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** SPRING'75 VENICE BIENNALE MEETING OF FOREIGN PAVILION COMMISSIONERS  
**TAGS:** SCUL, US, IT  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006